Chapter 31

The Child with a Metabolic Condition

Objectives

Relate why growth parameters are of importance to patients with a family history of endocrine disease.

List the symptoms of hypothyroidism in infants.

Discuss the dietary adjustment required for a child with diabetes insipidus.

Compare the signs and symptoms of hyperglycemia and hypoglycemia.

Objectives (cont.)

Differentiate between type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

List three precipitating events that might cause diabetic ketoacidosis.

List a predictable stress that the disease of diabetes has on children and families during the following periods of life: infancy, toddlers, preschool age, elementary school-age, puberty, and adolescence.

Objectives (cont.)

Outline the educational needs of the diabetic child and parents in the following areas: nutrition and meal planning, exercise, blood tests, administration of insulin, and skin care.

List three possible causes of insulin shock.

Explain the Somogyi phenomenon.

Discuss the preparation and administration of insulin to a child, highlighting any differences between pediatric and adult administration.

Endocrine System

Two major control systems that monitor the functions of the body are the

Nervous system
Endocrine system

- These systems are interdependent
- Endocrine (ductless) glands regulate the body’s metabolic processes
- Primary responsibilities
  - Growth
  - Maturation
  - Reproduction
  - Response of the body to stress

Endocrine System (cont.)

Endocrine System (cont.)

Hormones

- Chemical substances produced by the glands
- Secreted directly into the blood
- An organ specifically influenced by a certain hormone is called a target organ
- Too much or too little can result in disease

Endocrine System (cont.)

The absence or deficiency of an enzyme that has a role in metabolism causes a defect in the metabolic process

Most inborn errors of metabolism can be detected by clinical signs or screening tests that can be performed in utero

Lethargy, poor feeding, failure to thrive, vomiting, and an enlarged liver may be early signs of an inborn error of metabolism in the newborn

Endocrine System (cont.)
• If clinical signs are not manifested in the neonatal period, an infection or body stress can precipitate symptoms of a latent defect in the older child

• Unexplained mental retardation, developmental delay, convulsions, an odor to the body or urine, or episodes of vomiting may be subtle signs of a metabolic dysfunction

• Endocrine System (cont.)

• Studies that can help in the diagnosis
  — Radiographic
  — Serum blood screening tests
    • Phenylketonuria (PKU)
    • Chromosomal studies
  — Tissue biopsy
  — Thyroid function
  — Ultrasound
  — 24-hour urine specimen

• Inborn Errors of Metabolism

• Tay-Sachs Disease

• Deficiency of hexosaminidase, an enzyme necessary for the metabolism of fats
  — Lipid deposits accumulate on nerve cells causing physical and mental deterioration
  — Primarily found in the Ashkenazic Jewish population
  — Autosomal recessive trait

• Tay-Sachs Disease (cont.)

• Infant appears normal until about 5-6 months of age when physical development begins to slow (head lag or an inability to sit)

• As it progresses, blindness and mental retardation develop
Most children with Tay-Sachs die before 5 years of age due to secondary infection or malnutrition

There is no treatment

Nursing care is mainly palliative

Carriers can be identified by screening tests in the first trimester

Endocrine Disorders

Hypothyroidism

Deficiency in hormone secretions of the thyroid gland

May be congenital or acquired

- In congenital, the gland is absent or not functioning

More common endocrine disorders in children

Controls metabolism in the body

Symptoms may not be apparent for many months

Manifestations of Hypothyroidism

Infant is very sluggish and sleeps a lot

Tongue becomes enlarged, causing noisy respiration

Skin is dry, no perspiration

Hands and feet are cold

Infant feels floppy when handled

Chronic constipation

Hair eventually becomes dry and brittle

If left untreated, irreversible mental retardation and physical disabilities result
- Juvenile Hypothyroidism
  - Juvenile hypothyroidism acquired by the older child
    - Most often caused by lymphocytic thyroiditis
    - Often appears during rapid growth period
  - Symptoms and diagnosis similar to congenital hypothyroidism
  - Because brain growth is nearly complete by 2 to 3 years of age, mental retardation and neurological complications are not seen in the older child
- Screening for Hypothyroidism
  - A screening test for hypothyroidism is mandatory in the U.S. and is performed at birth
- Treatment for Hypothyroidism
  - Administration of synthetic thyroid hormone
  - Serum hormone levels monitored regularly
  - Therapy reverses symptoms and, in the infant, prevents further mental retardation but does not reverse existing retardation
  - Children may experience temporary, reversible hair loss, insomnia, aggressiveness, and their schoolwork may decline during the first few months of therapy
- Hormone replacement for hypothyroidism is lifelong
- Treatment for Hypothyroidism (cont.)
- Signs of too much thyroid replacement
  - Rapid pulse rate
  - Dyspnea
  - Irritability
  - Weight loss
Sweating

• Signs of too little thyroid replacement
  • Fatigue
  • Sleepiness
  • Constipation

• Parents should be instructed about both

• Diabetes Insipidus

• Diabetes Insipidus: Pituitary Gland (Anterior)

• Diabetes Insipidus: Pituitary Gland (Posterior)

• Parathyroid Gland Disorders

• Adrenal Gland Disorders

• Diabetes Mellitus (DM)

• Chronic metabolic syndrome—the body is unable to use carbohydrates properly
  • Leads to impairment of glucose transport

• Body unable to store and use fats properly

• Decrease in protein synthesis

• When blood glucose level becomes dangerously high
  • Glucose spills into the urine
  • Diuresis occurs

• Diabetes Mellitus (DM) (cont.)
  • Incomplete fat metabolism produces ketone bodies that accumulate in the blood
Known as ketonemia
  • Serious complication

DM impacts physical and psychological growth and development of children

Treatment designed to
  — Optimize growth and development
  — Minimize complications

Diabetes Mellitus (DM) (cont.)

Long-term complications related to hyperglycemia
  — Blindness
  — Circulatory problems
  — Kidney disease
  — Neuropathy

Classifications of DM

Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (DM)

Can occur at any time in childhood, new cases highest among
  — 5- and 7-year-olds: Stress of school and increased exposure to infectious diseases may be a triggering factor
  — 11- to 13-year-olds: During puberty, rapid growth, increased emotional stress, and insulin antagonism of sex hormones may be implicated

More difficult to manage in childhood because of growing, energy expenditure, varying nutritional needs

Initial diagnosis may be determined when the child develops ketoacidosis

Manifestations of Type 1 DM

Classic triad of symptoms
— Polydipsia
— Polyuria
— Polyphagia

• Symptoms appear more rapidly in children
• Insidious onset with lethargy, weakness, and weight loss also common
• Skin becomes dry
• Vaginal yeast infections may be seen in the adolescent girl
• Laboratory Findings in Type 1 DM
  • Glucose in urine (glycosuria)
  • Hyperglycemia
    — Occurs because glucose cannot enter the cells without the help of insulin; glucose stays in bloodstream
  • Cells use protein and fat for energy
    — Protein stores in body are depleted
    — Lack of glucose in cells triggers polyphagia
• Increase in glucose intake further increases glucose levels in the blood
• Honeymoon Period of Type 1 DM
  • After initially diagnosis, the child is stabilized by insulin dosage and condition may appear to improve
    — Insulin requirements decrease, child feels well
    — Supports parents’ phase of “denial”
• Lasts a short time; therefore, parents must closely monitor blood glucose levels to avoid complications
• Diagnostic Tests for DM
  • Random blood glucose
    — Blood is drawn at any time, no preparation; results should be within normal limits for both diabetic and nondiabetic patients
  • Fasting blood glucose
    — If greater than 126 mg/dL on two separate occasions, and the history is positive, patient is considered as having DM and requires treatment
  • Glucose tolerance test
    — Blood glucose level above 200 mg/dl is considered positive
  • Glycosylated hemoglobin (HbA1c):
    — Values of 6% to 9% represent very good metabolic control
    — Values above 12% indicate poor control
• Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA)
  • Also referred to as diabetic coma, even though patient may not be in one
  • May results from a secondary infection and patient does not follow proper self-care
  • May also occur if disease proceeds unrecognized
  • Ketoacidosis is the end result of the effects of insulin deficiency
• Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA) (cont.)
  • Signs and symptoms include
    — Ketonuria
    — Decreased serum bicarbonate concentration (decreased CO₂ levels) and low pH
    — Hypertonic dehydration
    — Fruity odor to breath
    — Nausea
    — ALOC
• Symptoms range from mild to severe
  — Occur within hours to days

• Treatment Goals of DM
  • Ensure normal growth and development through metabolic control
  • Enable child to cope with a chronic illness, have a happy and active childhood, and be well-integrated into the family
  • Prevent complications through tight blood glucose control

• Nursing Care of a Child with DM

• Parent and child education
  — Patient’s age, financial, educational, cultural, and religious situations must be considered when developing a teaching plan
    • For example, pork-based insulin may not be accepted by some religions; therefore, compliance with treatment may be reduced

• Nursing Care of a Child with DM (cont.)

• Children with DM are growing, additional dimensions of the disorder and its treatment become evident
  — Growth is not steady
  — Occurs in spurts and plateaus that affect treatment
  — Infants and toddlers may have hydration problems
  — Preschool children have irregular activity and eating patterns
  — School-age children may grieve over the diagnosis
  — May use illness to gain attention or to avoid responsibilities
  — Onset of puberty may require insulin adjustments
  — Adolescents often resent this condition and may have more difficulty in resolving conflict between dependence and independence; may lead to rebellion against parents and treatment regimen

• Triad of Management for DM
• Well-balanced diet
• Precise insulin administration
• Regular exercise
• Teaching Plan for a Child with DM
• Physiology of the pancreas and its function
• Function of insulin
• Blood glucose self-monitoring
• Diet therapy (glycemic index of foods and cholesterol intake)
• Insulin management
• Exercise
• Skin care
• Foot care
• Infections
• Emotional upsets
• Urine check
• Glucose-insulin imbalances
• Travel
• Follow-up care
• Illness or surgery
• Nutritional Management of DM
• Ensure normal growth and development
• Distribute food intake so that it aids metabolic control

• Individualize the diet in accordance with the child’s ethnic background, age, sex, weight, activity, family economics, and food preferences
  — Total estimated caloric intake is based upon body size or surface area
  — Most carbohydrate intake should consist of complex carbohydrates that absorb slowly and do not cause sudden and wide elevation of blood glucose

• Dietary Fiber and DM

• Soluble fiber has been shown to
  — Reduce blood glucose levels
  — Lower serum cholesterol values
  — Sometimes reduce insulin requirements

• Fiber appears to slow the rate of absorption of sugar by the digestive tract

• Safety Alert

• Instruct the patient and family to read food labels carefully
  — The word dietetic does not mean diabetic
  — Dietetic merely means something has been changed or replaced
    • For example, the food may contain less salt or less sugar

• Insulin Administration

• Teach parents and child

• Insulin cannot be taken orally because it is a protein and would be broken down by the gastric juices

• Usual method of administration is subcutaneously

• Insulin Administration (cont.)

• In general, a child can be taught to perform self-injection after 7 years of age
Insulin Administration (cont.)

Sites of injections are rotated to prevent poor absorption and injury to tissue

- Lipoatrophy can occur if sites are not rotated

Should not inject into areas that would have a temporarily increased circulation, such as in a child pedaling a bike, you would not inject into the leg

Mixing Insulin

Insulin

Main difference is in the amount of time required for it to take effect and the length of protection time

- The response to any given insulin dose is highly individualized and depends on many factors, such as site of injection, local destruction of insulin by tissue enzymes, and insulin antibodies

Insulin can also be given through a pump device

Insulin Shock

Also known as hypoglycemia

Blood glucose level becomes abnormally low

Caused by too much insulin

Factors

- Poorly planned exercise
- Reduced diet
- Errors made because of improper knowledge of insulin and the insulin syringe

Insulin Shock (cont.)

Children are more prone to insulin reactions than adults because

- The condition itself is more unstable in young people
They are growing
Their activities are more irregular

- Symptoms of insulin reaction
  - Irritable
  - May behave poorly
  - Pale
- May complain of feeling hungry and weak
- Sweating occurs
- CNS symptoms arise because glucose is vital to proper functioning of nerves
- Insulin Shock (cont.)
- Immediate treatment
  - Administering sugar in some form, such as orange juice, hard candy, or a commercial product
  - Begins to feel better within a few minutes and then may eat a small amount of protein or starch to prevent another reaction
  - Glucagon is recommended in cases of severe hypoglycemia
- Somogyi Phenomenon
- Rebound hyperglycemia
  - Blood glucose levels are lowered to a point at which the body’s counter-regulatory hormones (epinephrine, cortisol, glucagon) are released
  - Glucose is released from muscle and liver cells which leads to a rapid rise in blood glucose levels
- Somogyi Phenomenon (cont.)
  - Generally the result of chronic insulin use, especially in patients who required fairly large doses of insulin to regulate their blood sugars
• Hypoglycemia during the night and high glucose levels in the morning are suggestive of the phenomenon

• Child may need less insulin, not more, to rectify the problem

• Somogyi Phenomenon (cont.)

• Differs from the dawn phenomenon in which early morning elevations of blood glucose occur without preceding hypoglycemia but may be a response to growth hormone secretion that occurs in the early morning hours

• Together the Somogyi and dawn phenomena are the most common causes of instability in diabetic children

• Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (DM)

• Thought to be precipitated by
  — Obesity
  — Low physical activity
  — Lipid-rich diet resulting in insulin resistance

• Diet is main emphasis of management along with exercise and other weight control measures

• Insulin, oral hypoglycemic medications contribute to stable control of blood glucose level

• Question for Review

• What is the difference between a blood glucose level and an HgbA\textsubscript{1c} level, as seen in the lab report of a child with diabetes mellitus?
• Online Resources
• Review Questions